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To become **“Relationship Professional”**:
the challenge that Project Managers must win

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Session overview

- Short introduction
- Our experience
- Lessons learned
- New initiatives

An important preliminary remark

- Why are we here?
- What is the part we play?
- What is the part YOU play?

2006 closing questions

- If human behaviour is based on socialization, why is it so difficult to build relationships within organizations?
- Are people generally change resistant? Or is the fault to be found in organizations which lead to conformism?

● Source: *W. Ginevri, C. Beraha – The “Missing Manager Syndrome” PMI EMEA Congress 2006*

2007 starting questions

- How important is being **relationship management professionals**, or:
 - being able to perceive one's emotions and manage them to projects advantage
 - estimating our collaborators' results only according to the goals to be achieved
 - focusing on the present moment and feeling free from the compulsion of demonstrating we are in some given way
 - formulating questions with curiosity, and avoiding sentences such as “that's not fair, that's not true, they don't understand me”

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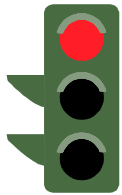
Training pathway requirements

- Course subject characteristics
 - Based on a “best-of-breed” of **innovative** disciplines
 - Focused on **behaviour**, not on processes
 - Applicable in any context (even in a **personal one**)
- Course form characteristics
 - “**Group coaching**” instead of classical training
 - Practice conducted on cases **directly experienced** by PMs

Few numbers and data

- 3 meetings distributed over 4 months and always scheduled on **Saturdays**
- 2 editions between May and October 2006, with 34 participants of different sectors (**not only PMs**)
- Agreeable seat, with special care to hall brightness and **layout**
- **Break-even** between costs and proceeds in order to keep participation fee as low as possible

Training pathway stages



Step 1 (**offence**): starting from the subject of “offence” and pointing out its distinctive elements

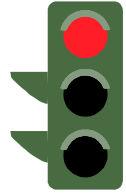


Step 2 (**awareness**): understanding the true mechanisms that give birth to, and nourish offence



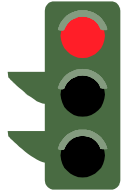
Step 3 (**alternatives**): practicing the use of some techniques aimed at managing offence and avoiding becoming its victims

Step 1



Why begin with the feeling of offence

- It's rather **easy to understand** how offence works
- Offence is powerful and **widely spread**
- Offence is **harmful**, especially in projects:
 - It distracts us from our goals
 - It restricts communication possibilities
 - It leads to conformism little by little



Step 1

Offence and key questions

- Offence arises from a negative statement or behaviour someone addresses to us
- To begin our analysis, we should think back to a recent episode and try to recall the following:
 - **How did I react?**
 - **What did I feel?**
 - **What were my thoughts?**



Step 2

Offence awareness: its automatism

- Offence is associated to a **physical sensation** (a lump in our throat, a weight on our stomach, etc.)
- Offence entails thoughts we can call our “**inner dialogue**”, that empower it even more
- When we suffer an offence, we **automatically** react, never thinking we have alternatives



Step 2

Offence awareness: the trap

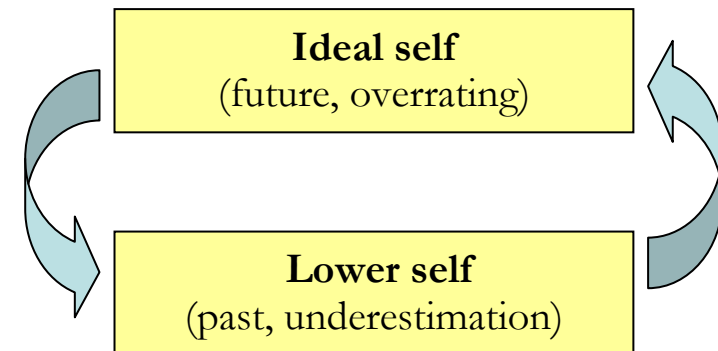
- We fall into this trap, nourished by our inner dialogue, which works like a kind of **imaginary film**
 - If we reject the image our interlocutor is picturing of us, we usually react with anger, we feel misunderstood and we try to ignore him/her, to no avail
 - If we fear our self coincides with the picture our interlocutor is giving of us, we feel depressed because we identify in a negative image



Step 2

Offence awareness: the mechanism

- Taking offence is an automatic behaviour, something **we do on our own**, even when that was exactly the offender's aim
- We actually take offence because we pass a judgement on ourselves, comparing two different pictures:
 - The picture of how **we think we should be**
 - The picture of how **we think we have been**





Step 3

Alternatives to offence: where to stand

Position of offence

- I mix reality and my thoughts
- I suffer emotions
- I exist passively and pass judgement on myself
- I pursue other peoples' goals
- I'm a victim or not-guilty

Position of respect/observation

- I can tell my thoughts from reality
- I can single out emotions
- I'm a perceiving subject
- I pursue my own goals
- I'm "respons-able" (able to respond)



Step 3

Alternatives to offence: what to do

- We could realize we are on **the edge of offence** and formulate questions (ex: what am I reacting to?)
- We could concentrate on the **other person's mood** and formulate questions (ex: what is he feeling? what is he afraid of?)
- We could formulate questions aimed at understanding the problem (ex: which **behaviour** of mine generated which **effect**?)
- We could apply **stress reducing techniques**: keep our attention open at 180°, sort out our sensations (ser/estar), focus on empty spaces, see the humorous side of the situation...



Step 3

Alternatives to offence: an example

After listing a few conflict generating episodes:

- In each episode put into evidence the element/s we reacted to (this episode ... means that)
- List for each element at least three likely explanations to our interlocutor's behaviour
- Formulate questions in order to check each supposition
- Choose the question which suits best the context we'd like to create with our interlocutor

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Few of the participants' feedback

- “In the relationship with my children I learnt to “understand” more and expect less”.
- “I learnt that no one can help me the way I can”.
- “The course made me aware of my need for a professional pathway of my own”.
- “Now I automatically put the question “What do you mean when you say...?””
- “I learnt that **I’m not my behaviour nor my results**”.

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New initiatives: 2007 starting point

Occidental approach

- I build an ideal model and I operate to achieve my model according to a plan
- I try to foresee any possibility in order to keep everything under control
- Every circumstance is a stumbling-block deviating me from the expected outcome

Oriental approach

- I focus not on a model, but on the current situation and its potential
- I am aware of favourable factors by which to be carried
- Circumstances are opportunities which integrate potential

● Source: *François Jullien: Conférence sur l'efficacité – 2005*

New initiatives: “complexity management”

- In order to face the complexity lying ahead, good planning is not enough anymore
- It's necessary to increase PMs' professional ability of dealing under uncertain conditions
- Here are the seminars PMI NIC is organizing for its members:
 - **Creative problem solving**
 - **Qualitative time management**
 - **Narrating a project**
 - **Making the best use of “mental maps”**

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Neurolinguistica

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Scritti



Lavorare senza offendersi
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